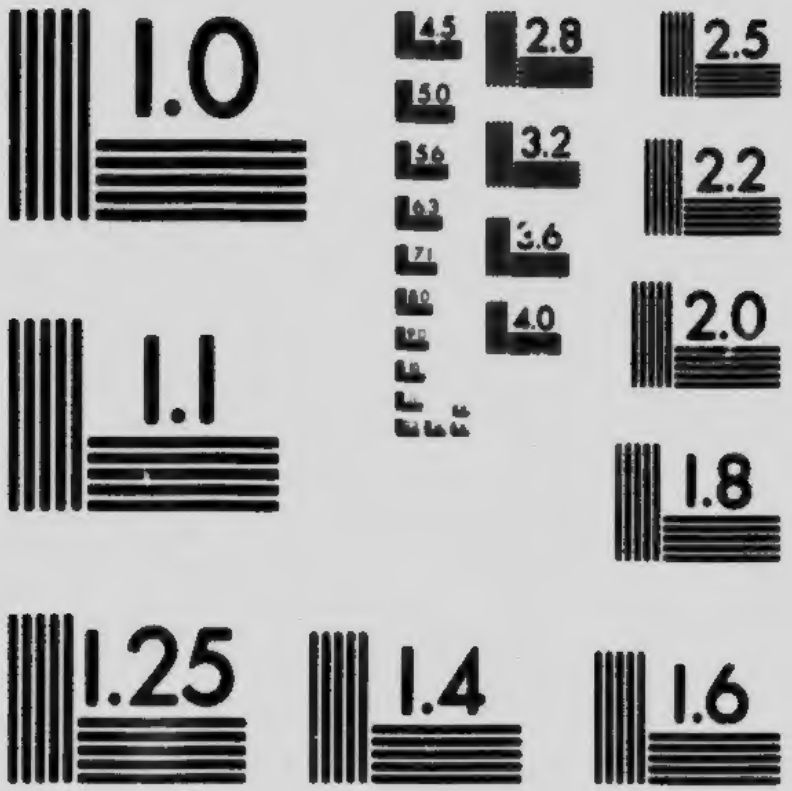

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"The Canadian Forces"

An Address by the Honourable William Renwick Riddell, LL.D., Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, proposing the Toast:— "The Canadian Forces," at a Banquet of Cyrene Preceptory, No. 29, K.T., Toronto, Feb. 7th, 1917.

+ SIGILLVM · MILITVM · XPISTI

William Renwick Riddell

"The Canadian Forces"

AN ADDRESS BY

THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL, LL.D.,
JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF ONTARIO

PROPOSING THE TOAST—"THE CANADIAN FORCES"

AT A BANQUET OF CYRENE PRECEPTORY, No. 29, K.T., TORONTO,
FEBRUARY 7TH, 1917.

SIR KNIGHTS AND GENTLEMEN,—Not being a member of the Order of Knights Templar, I feel the more complimented at being asked to propose this toast. I am indeed somewhat at home in the Blue and not wholly a stranger in the Royal Arch amongst those who have found the Word: but my knowledge of Knight Templary is exoteric and only that which any one not admitted to your mysteries may have.

Something of the Knights Templars of history of course all know. Founded almost exactly eight hundred years ago, they went down in blood and torture after an illustrious career of two centuries. When Jacques de Molay on that little island in the Seine rendered up his heroic soul in the flames of martyrdom, summoning ruthless king and treacherous pope to meet him before the throne of God, the old order of Knights Templars passed away.

For two hundred years these devoted men had stood in the very forefront of battle for Christianity and civilization, and none too generous praise has been their meed from history. Without them, it might well have been that the Paynim would have conquered; but ever they stood steadfast, true to their vow "to fight with a pure mind for the supreme and true King." And we now enjoy the fruits of their labours and sacrifices.

I do not know, not being admitted into the arcana, whether the modern Order of Knights Templar has a valid claim to represent that of the olden time. I have met those with whom it is almost a matter of religion that the succession of Grand Masters is known from Jacques de Molay to Sir Sidney Smith, and that there never was a breach of continuity. Others again I have known who deride such a claim and express themselves well satisfied with their position as members of an acknowledged and legitimate degree of Freemasonry.

However it may seem to a Knight Templar, to me it is of little moment what the fact may be. Let the dead past bury its dead, and let us live in the living present. All may live in accord with the oath of the former Order, and fight with a pure mind for the supreme and true King. And when was it so necessary as at the present time, when the world is in travail and the last great fight is being fought?

What of our Empire? Is it not the true Templar in this struggle?

Other nations went into this war from various reasons. Russia desired to free herself from the commercial tyranny of Germany as well as to protect the "little brother" Serbia. France was forced to fight or to tread again the bitter vale of humiliation; it needed not the yearning after the Provinces loved and lost—rich Alsace and beautiful Lorraine—to induce her to take up the sword. Italy longed for her Italia yet Irredenta, her unredeemed members. The brutal greed after the world's commerce and wealth, and world power, which induced Germany to go to war, was almost equalled by that of the Fox of the Balkans, who guessed that the Central Powers would win the war—thank God, he guessed wrong—and struck the treacherous blow that his country and he might be aggrandized. Austria in part was influenced by desire of territorial expansion and in part was hypnotized by her dominant partner; while poor Turkey was almost literally kicked into war by her German Old Man of the Sea.

But Britain had no lack of commerce. She was as she is—supreme in wealth and the mightiest power in the world. She had no jealousy of others or fear of rivals. She had as much territory as she desired and more, the weary Titan bearing much more than a fair share of the White Man's burden. She had no Britannia Irredenta, no lost Provinces to recover; no nation dictated her financial policy or her customs tariff. She wished nothing more and nothing else than to be let alone to carry on her business and to develop in her own way. There may have been here and there a fire-eater who believing that a conflict with the arrogant braggart of Central Europe was inevitable, thought it might as well come now as later; there may have been here and there a merchant or a financier who, weary of unfair competition, was willing, nay even desirous that the good-natured complaisance of Britain toward her ungrateful and sneaking competitor should cease and that that nation should be taught if necessary by the sword that its underhanded conduct must cease: here and there, there may have been an adventurer, a restless spirit who desired war for its own sake: but I say without hesitation and without fear of successful contradiction that the great mass of the British people, gentle and simple, noble, merchant and labourer, had a passion for peace, desired nothing but peace, envied and hated no people, wanted but to be let alone.

That was not to be.

The Blond Beast made his spring so long prepared; an innocent people who had done nothing to offend, whose sole crime was their standing in the Beast's way, were invaded, ravaged, tortured. Their cry went out to Britain: "We have kept the faith pledged to you, will you fail us?" The great heart of Britain throbbed with sympathy, her people rose as one. "No—

'A scrap of paper where a name is set,
Is strong as duty's pledge and honour's debt'"—

the "contemptible little army" was sent across the Channel and Britain strains every nerve for the right.

A pure mind she has; her conflict is not for power or wealth or territory, but that her faith may be kept, her honour unsullied; and she fights for the supreme and true King whose word is the moral law—the law of right and justice.

Nothing else could have so moved the soul of the Old Land; not alone the Britain of the patrician, but the Britain of the middle class and of the lower class and of the lowest class felt the appeal to the innate sense of justice which is found in all men who have not smothered it. Had Germany only attacked France, only warred against Russia and Serbia, Britain might indeed at length have been drawn into the vortex, but it would have been a divided Britain, not the unanimous Britain who raised her lance and put on her armour for wronged and martyred Belgium.

And could Canada refrain? Canada herself knew what it was to be invaded; in 1775, Arnold at Quebec met resistance from the gallant French-Canadian Chasseurs; in 1812, Hull was met at Detroit, Van Rensselaer at Queenston Heights, others at Lundy's Lane and Crysler's Farm by Upper Canadian Militia as well as by British regulars, at Chateauguay by De Salaberry and his Voltigeurs, and the gallant Highlanders of Glengarry; in 1866 our University boys showed their courage with their comrades in the Fenian Raid. All these invasions, indeed, were with the avowed purpose of freeing our country from supposed British tyranny and not to enslave and murder our people as the Hun is doing in Belgium and wherever else his power prevails; but none the less, Canadians fought for their own ideals and their right to develop in their own way. Nor was it in Canada alone that the prowess of Canadians was felt. From Kars, where the Nova Scotian Williams held the fort long after hope had vanished from the heart of others, to Paardeburg, whose victory was in no small degree due to Canadian dash and valour; from the Rapids of the Nile, where the panting boatman hoping against hope, pressed on to save Gordon, to Mafeking, where the Empire called, Canada was seen ready to do and die.

War had not been declared when our Prime Minister pledged to the Mother across the sea our last man and our last dollar—and four hundred thousand Canadians have put on the King's uniform and another hundred thousand are on the way, to implement the pledge so proudly given.

During the course of the war many changes have taken place; many things which would not have been insisted upon at first, have now been shown to be necessary.

Britain both at home and in South Africa looked without suspicion on the efforts at colonization by Germany in the Dark Continent. Straightforward and open herself in her Colonial policy, she did not suspect Germany of treachery in hers. But now it is known that the German colonies were arsenals of weapons with which to attack the British colonies and to drive Britain from Africa; the infamous slaughter of her own blacks and the cunning tampering with those under the British flag show that Germany is a treacherous and unsafe neighbour, and she cannot again be allowed to colonize in Africa, or in the Isles of the Sea.

When the two provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were torn from the bleeding side of France, they did not become a second Eve, a new and beautiful entity, but leaving an open wound in the side of the mother, they remained a festering sore in the side of Germany. They must come back. France can never again see her body dismembered ; her children cannot be kept away any longer, they must come home.

Turkey, so long the problem of Europe, has solved its own problem—it has pushed itself into the hand of Germany a willing instrument of every horror of murder and massacre. Bad enough when it had volition of its own, at least it was sometimes amenable to reason,—but now a mere sword in the hand of Germany, as well seek reason in the inanimate iron as in Turkey. And therefore Turkey must go—the cup of its iniquity is full.

Bulgaria, which bit the hand which fed her, which turned on the nation which at the expense of seas of blood and millions of treasure set her free from Turkish torture, Bulgaria, which judged the occasion fit for profit at the expense of honour and gratitude, and which dealt the traitor's blow, must be taught that there is a moral law between nations as between men, the violation of which inevitably brings its own punishment.

Victory is in the air, but we cannot yet relax our efforts.

Within the last few days it has become possible, even probable, that our neighbours to the south may be drawn into a conflict with our enemies.

I was one of those who believed that the future peace of the world would be brought about by the English-speaking nations and that belief is not yet dead. I spent no little time in the endeavour to make the people of the United States and our own people better known to each other, for I was, and am, wholly confident that the more we know of each other the more we will see and feel our fundamental unity.

But during the war, there has been a change in moral as in material values. Many of us, fervently hoping that the United States might keep out of the war, yet expected and longingly awaited the word of approbation for the one side, the word of rebuke, even of stern protest against breach of treaty and brutal oppression by the other. It did not come ; but instead came the injunction that the American people show passive neutrality in deed, word and thought. I have no complaint to make. The President of the United States and the people of the United States are guardians of their own honour: they have a right to do or say what they please concerning their own affairs. I have some difficulty, indeed, in understanding neutrality in thought, unless it is negation of thought, the easiest of all virtues and the most generally practised. But the President was speaking to his own people, and it is no business of mine what he said or what he meant.

When, however, a short time ago the President said that this war should end in a peace without victory, he was speaking not alone to his own people, but to the world at large, and to Canada ; and I think the universal sentiment of Canadians was, "Don't butt in," "You kept silent when Belgium was outraged, when Serbia was overrun, don't interfere now ; the peace with which this war will end is the peace which the Allies dictate ; they who have borne the burden and the heat of the day, who have poured out their blood

and treasure as water for democracy and right will see to it that the right peace is made, and if it be necessary to have victory in order to have that peace, they will have victory."

Matters are not quite the same now as a month ago, but there is no material change. If the United States go to war, it will not be our war except in the sense that it will be against our enemies. The United States will go to war to protect its own people from slaughter, its own ships from destruction, its own property from being captured or destroyed. The United States may logically make a peace without victory; let but the Huns and the Turks agree not to butcher American sailors and agree to spare American ships and Washington may say, "My task is done ; let us have peace."

But our war is for broader, more far-reaching objects : international morality, the right of every nation, small as well as large, to live and develop in its own way, that the democratic people may remain democratic, that government of the people by the people for the people may not perish from off the face of the earth.

If the United States has abdicated its place as the leader of democracy on this continent, Canada takes it up, for Canada has found her soul, never again to lose it.

Blow, bugles, blow ! They brought us, for our dearth
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage ;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again ;
And we have come into our heritage.

Canada then must stand beside her Mother till victory is won. We of the Allies must depend upon ourselves, welcoming any assistance the United States may give and in any case demanding the sympathy of every lover of democracy in the United States as elsewhere.

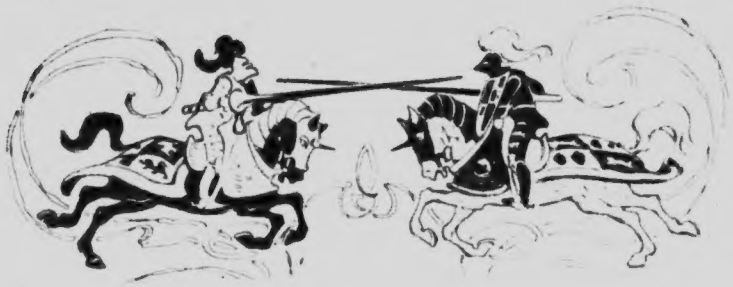
We sometimes boast of what Canada has done—what Ontario has done—what Toronto has done—what our Lodge or our Society has done. All these have done nothing but pay a little money. What can a Dominion or a Province or a City or a Lodge do but pay a little money ? What can aged and aging men do but talk and pay money ? Not to these be the honour, not to these the praise.

The glory and honour are owing and must be paid to the splendid lads who have donned khaki, who, whether on the plains of France and Flanders, in old England, on the Sea or in our own dear Canada, have done and are doing their bit for the cause of us all.

It is to these men that I am asked to propose a toast—and it is for that reason that I am so proud to be asked to propose this toast.

I ask you to charge your glasses and to drink with me to that gallant band,—The Canadian Forces.

God bless them and God keep them—The Canadian Forces.



Honor Roll

Members of Cyrene Preceptory with Canadian Expeditionary Forces

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Sir Kt. C. W. Anderson
" J. E. Brown
Rt. Em. " D. A. Clark
" J. A. Currie
" R. H. Cuthbert
" J. A. Gilpin
" John M. Gibson
" A. S. Hamilton
" Daniel Hillman
" A. T. Hunter
" C. M. Ingall
" E. C. Johnston
" John Sharp
" Robert A. Shaw
" W. E. Struthers
Em. " Raymond Walker, Jr.
" W. H. Wellwood
" Geo. H. Woodburn
" James N. Wilson